

I voted against the Defense Appropriations bill last night because of its pricetag that is unprecedented in peacetime and unjustified by the threat, and the misplaced priorities within the bill.

Representative DeFazio's amendment was a step in a more rational direction. It would have reduced the next two years' purchases of F-22 fighter aircraft, as recommended by the General Accounting Office, and redirected the savings to readiness and quality of life accounts.

It was a modest amendment, and it did not cut money from the defense budget. It just spent it on higher-priority issues at a time when the F-22 continues to experience technical problems and we already have the world's most advanced fighter, the F-15.

The \$930 million saved would have been spent instead on items that were not funded at the level requested by the Department of Defense, or were included on the Pentagon's unfunded 'wish list.' Those items include additional funding for troops on food stamps, nuclear threat reduction, bonus payments to sailors on sea duty, facilities maintenance, spare parts, and recruiting.

I want to also speak to the larger issues of the bill. We made some gains this year on the issue of military retirees' health care. Most important is this bill's provision of \$94 million for a pharmacy benefit for all Medicare-eligible military retirees and eligible family members. This set an important precedent for us to eventually provide prescription drug coverage to all Medicare recipients. Those who have served in our military are a well-deserving group with which to start.

This bill continues various health care demonstration projects--including Medicare subvention and the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan. Another important aspect of military retiree health care included in this bill is the Uniformed Services Family Health Plan. These are locally-run, community-based HMOs that provide military retirees another choice. I look forward to the findings of the independent oversight panel funded in this bill which will present recommendations to Congress on a permanent military health care program for the Medicare-eligible.

Unfortunately, there continue to be unmet needs. The Department of Defense Comptroller has just done a study that shows that the military health care system for active-duty and

retirees up to age 65 as currently structured is underfunded over the next 6 years by \$9 billion.

In addition to taking care of its people, our military has an important role to play in taking care of the environment, Congress needs to make clear that cleaning up after itself is a cost of doing business for our military just as it is for any other polluter.

DOD is responsible for environmental cleanup at thousands of what are known as Formerly-Used Defense Sites. At many of these properties, owned by private parties and state, local, and tribal governments, the public may come into contact with residual contamination. The cost of completing this cleanup is estimated at over \$7 billion by the Army Corps of Engineers, yet funding in this bill is less than \$200 million.

Another danger to communities is unexploded ordnance, old bombs and shells that could kill or injure people who encounter them. The cost of clearing these bombs is estimated at \$15 billion by the Defense Science Board. The consistent underfunding of this challenge could begin to be addressed if it had its own line item in the defense budget. I call upon the Administration to create this line item in the request it is preparing now for submission to Congress for FY02 funding.

More than a decade after the Soviet Union collapsed, our investment in national defense has returned to cold-war levels. During the cold war, the United States spent an average of \$325 billion in current year dollars on the military. This year's budget resolution gave the Pentagon \$310 billion--95 percent of cold-war levels and 52 percent of discretionary spending.

And now Monday's Washington Post has a front-page story stating that, starting now, the Joint Chiefs of Staff plan to submit budget requests that call for additional spending of more than \$30 billion a year through most of this decade.

There is no reason to continue our reliance on a cold-war economy. Our massive investments in weapons and bases could be replaced with massive investments in education and health care and the other things that make for livable communities. While we are first in military expenditures among industrialized countries, we are 17th in low-birthweight rates, 21st in eighth-grade math scores and 22nd in infant mortality.

Remarks on Defense Appropriations

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The defense budget is large, certainly large enough to fund the programs that are needed for the people who serve and have served us and for the environment. Instead, it spends too much on duplicative weapons systems and questionable technologies at a time when we lead the world many times over in military might. We need to get our priorities right.